

My name is Patricia K. Sanieski, I live in Enfield, Connecticut. I fully support HB 5372 An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction Offered in Teacher Preparation Programs. I am a Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, and I have a M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction.

I began my journey into dyslexia in the early/mid-seventies as a co-ed at Southern Connecticut State College, majoring in Early Childhood Education. I was always fascinated with reading as I had difficulty learning to read as a youngster, though not due to dyslexia but physical eye problems. So therefore I gravitated towards courses in college that would assist me with becoming a strong teacher of reading. Here is where my real concerns began.

As one might recall, teaching positions in the seventies were few and far between. My boyfriend, now husband, worked at a school in western NY for dyslexic boys. I would visit him and became very interested in how they were teaching these students to read. I'd return to college (Southern), and during interesting conversations with some of my professors, I would be told there was no such thing as dyslexia! Imagine my confusion – I had just visited a whole school of students with that learning difference so it was hard to understand how they didn't exist.

Upon graduation, I pursued a teaching position. After marriage, three children, many days of subbing in a variety of schools and grades, and beginning graduate courses, I finally became a second grade teacher, I couldn't have been any happier and prouder. By this time (1980) my husband left the dyslexic school in NY and was now working at another school for boys with language-based learning differences such as dyslexia in MA. I was fortunate to be able to participate in the professional development trainings they offered their teachers. It was here that I started my official training in Orton-Gillingham or structured literacy.

Eventually I left teaching my second graders, and began working at this school that changed lives. The students came to us with little success in learning to read in spite of average to above IQ and well-meaning classroom and Special Education teachers. I saw first-hand the emotional impact inappropriate, ineffective, and unproductive teaching had on these students. With the right instructional methodology, these students thrived and regained their self-esteem. I observed this for more than 30 years as their teacher.

Upon retirement, in June of 2016, my husband and I returned to our home state of CT. My trainings had led me to the level of now being able to train other teachers in structured literacy, in particular, Orton-Gillingham. It did not take long for me to conduct trainings for teachers from across the state, Darien to Eastford, Litchfield to Guilford, and many towns in between. After some of the teachers returned to their school districts, I have been contracted to train other teachers and guide them through a practicum. Professors from within CSCU have also reached out to me about training them so they are able to properly prepare new teachers.

Training at the district level is a burden to all involved. Teachers are required to attend the trainings that take place before, during, or after the school day or throughout the summer months. Usually, I hear that their workload is not adjusted to allow them the time needed to study and practice the new information and methods. Training in structured literacy requires time. One cannot just attend a “workshop” and then instantly apply the new knowledge. Teachers must be allowed a supervised practicum which gives them the opportunity to practice the new skills.

Training a teacher in structured literacy is expensive at the District level. The cost to train a classroom educator in the basic fundamentals of structured literacy is a minimum of \$3,000 and takes at least one school year. Reading Specialist and Special Educators need more training so they can begin more intensive work with those students requiring more than the classroom teacher can provide. This will cost the district about \$6,000 for each teacher. Again the time is a minimum of one school year but usually takes most teachers more time due to schedules. Special Education teachers actually must obtain the level of training needed to work with the most severe students. This requires the district to provide another \$6,000 of training and practicum over a two-year commitment.

Teachers come and go from one district to another. Training at the District level will never be complete. How do you best offer continuity of instruction to the students in our public schools? Teachers properly trained in structured literacy while in Connecticut State College and University (CSCU) system is the answer. Structured literacy is paramount for students dealing with dyslexia, but truth be told, structured literacy is good instruction for all students!